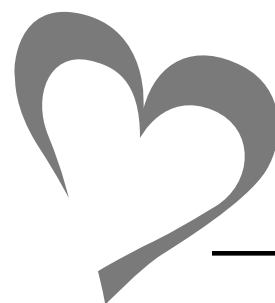




You Should Know...



How to Handle Stress During Pregnancy

Pregnancy is a special time in a woman's life. When you are pregnant you have many physical and emotional changes and experience a variety of mixed feelings including happiness, excitement and even stress.

Some stress is a normal and natural part of pregnancy. However, you may not know that health risks from stress are greater during pregnancy and can be harmful to you and your baby.

To avoid stress, it is necessary to identify sources of stress and deal with them before they become overwhelming. After all, pregnant women have a number of new concerns - they often worry about their baby's health, labor and delivery, and their ability to be a good parent.

Sources of Stress Can Be Related to:

- ♡ Pregnancy related discomforts such as nausea, fatigue and swelling
- ♡ Worrying about the changes in your body and physical appearance
- ♡ Relationships with people
- ♡ Concerns about working and paying bills

High Levels of Stress Can Cause:

- ♡ Sleeplessness and anxiety
- ♡ Poor appetite or overeating
- ♡ Headaches and backaches

Continued high levels of stress can cause lowered resistance to certain diseases, high blood pressure and heart disease.

How Can You Reduce Stress?

- ♡ Eat a healthy diet
- ♡ Get plenty of sleep
- ♡ Avoid alcohol, cigarettes and drugs
- ♡ Exercise regularly
- ♡ Take time to relax and be realistic about what you can accomplish each day
- ♡ Talk to your health care provider about the changes you experience
- ♡ Seek help from family, friends, other mothers and support groups

Local clinics, county offices, community-based organizations and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) offices are also great resources for mothers who have questions about dealing with stress. Remember, you are not alone, "We're in this together."

Sources: March of Dimes, and the California Department of Health Services' BabyCal campaign and MCH/CPSP Programs